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in terms of conduct, of practical reason, to use the honorable and useful Kantian term, the inner, real unity of human beings. Its essence is always this universality; its accidents are the effect of varying degrees of insight into the meaning and validity of the terms in which the law is expressed; especially in its interpretation of external and individual human relations to which the law must take attitude.

Interdependence is the conception of the unity after the type of our intellect; that is, in terms of the speculative reason. Hence this conception is much influenced by the methods and ideals of our general science and philosophy. This conception sets the type for all really explanatory ethics. It seems clear that no theory of duty and the moral law can be competent which does not construct some consistent and reliable conception of unity among those who are mutually bound by the chains of duty.

Love is the reality of which these, law and interdependence, are formulas and theories; or in another view love is the immediate gift or knowledge of the reality, a gift without which the very beginnings of moral and social life were unthinkable.

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### THE ENDEMIC RELIGIOUS INSANITY OF THE ISLAND OF ST. VINCENT.

In the island of St. Vincent, West Indies, has been prevalent for some years a system of religious exercises practiced by a sect commonly called the "Shakers." The devotees speak of themselves as the "Converted" or the "Penitents."

It must be understood that these people do not profess or hold any distinctive doctrines. The fundamental idea of their worship is the necessity for "Conversion" in the sense taught by the Wesleyans, Salvation Army, Plymouth Brethren and other allied forms of Christianity. They do not aim at establishing an independent sect, nor do they count themselves as separated each one from his Church.

The chief teacher, Brother Ragguet, expressly repudiates such an idea. He preaches repentance and contrition, but directs every one to cleave to his own religious body. He holds that all churches are true except that of the Seventh Day Adventists, whom he calls

"Babblers vexing the Church." The teachers of the Penitents profess only to guide the sinner to repentance, to assist him in obtaining forgiveness and peace, to correct him for lapses and to keep him in possession of the right spirit. Among the members therefore are persons belonging to the Anglican, Wesleyan, and Presbyterian bodies.

There is nothing reprehensible in all this in theory. In fact, however, the fascination lies in the emotional excitement produced by the rejoicing at the possession of salvation and in that psychical erethism, which in so many forms of religion is attributed to divine inspiration. The doctrine of conversion and the resulting states of mental exaltation have been long familiar to the negroes through the Wesleyan revival meetings.

The practices of the Penitents are thus a direct outcome of Wesleyan Methodism; and their extreme manifestations do not surpass the excesses to be seen at the Wesleyan revival meetings in Tortola in the Virgin Islands. The emotional phases of Methodism are, I believe, now-a-days deprecated by most ministers and cultured adherents of that Church. But they are unhappily so natural to the temperament of the uneducated and hysterical negro race, that this spontaneous adaptation of them by the St. Vincent Penitents finds a fertile soil for its spread.

As far as the writer can ascertain Brother Ragguet has been the greatest exponent of the methods of the Penitents. Charles Kingsley mentions the existence of Shakers in St. Vincent, and Ragguet and Mrs. Baptiste, the two most venerated teachers of this day, admit having received their ideas from a former teacher. The writer has cultivated the acquaintance of Ragguet for some time with the view to learning somewhat of the inwardness of the movement. He is an albino negro of hideous appearance. His face and neck are covered with freckles and incipient rodent ulcers, and he has a well developed epithelioma on the cheek. This he has not yet been persuaded to part with.

Mentally he is a typical mattoid without education. His manner is intense and earnest, his eye insane, his voice loud and strident. He presents the megalomania of the mattoid, the oneness of idea, the persistence of purpose, the power of influencing the masses. He will not wear shoes because the angels do not. He says he is "the Apostle of the Work" in St. Vincent. "I am an angel upon earth," he said to the writer with all seriousness. He prophesies. He claims to have prophesied the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions

of 1902; and the peasants and some better than they believe him. Ragguet is not now in communion with all the Penitents of the island; he disapproves of the pretensions of most of the teachers. He only affords his countenance to two of the "praise-houses," but preaches in the streets and market-places.

The whole system as carried out in St. Vincent is no doubt the product of an evolution and was not devised by any one person. There are perhaps differences of detail in the methods of the teachers. But as teachers and members very frequently visit from place to place to assist at meetings, the practices must be fairly uniform. The songs used are certainly so.

Services are held every Sunday night in "praise-houses," of which there are over twenty in the island. These places are thatched huts with open sides and hard trodden earth floor. Any one may attend the meeting and join in the singing and rejoicing. Where there is a large membership or in the neighborhood of a teacher there is a "penance house," commonly with two apartments for the separation of the sexes, or there may be two huts. One informant, a policeman, affirms that he once entered a penance house and found several persons of both sexes asleep, worn out, he conjectures, by their prayers. When the penance house is occupied a white flag is shown on a staff.

Every person desirous of joining the membership must spend a period of "moanin" in the penance house. He is then said to be "on the knee" or "bruising the knee." Each candidate brings three shillings in cash, some candles and a bottle of olive oil. During the whole time of "moanin" (probably corrupt for "mourning") the candidates remain in the penance house. An attendant, who for the females is called a "nurse," prepares their food. Only salt fish, plantains, olive oil and bread are allowed.

On their admission the teacher comes to "point" the candidates. They stand in a row with the elbows bent and the palms upwards. Each has a lighted candle before his feet. Absolute silence is enforced and the initiate gazes at the candle and abstracts himself to "pray in the heart." When weary he may kneel and rise again. Thus he may remain several hours on end. He usually "goes from himself" while so standing.

Each day this is repeated. The rest of the day is supposed to be devoted to meditation. At night the initiates lie flat on their backs. It is admitted that conversation does take place, but it is not supposed to, and they believe that the teacher by his power knows of it.

Occasionally the teacher visits to pray with and counsel his disciples. It is stated that the teacher sometimes visits the females at night, but a converted woman in describing her experience says the nurse always came in with the teacher.

The hypnotic intent of the process of "pointing" is obvious, as well as the silence and mental abstraction enjoined. It is astonishing that so effectual a method could have been unconsciously evolved.

The negro seems to be more readily influenced by suggestion than the white. The writer finds 87 per cent. of pure negroes are hypnotized at the first attempt by the methods of Nancy, as against 80-84 per cent. susceptible at all in the experience of European hypnotists.

If a disciple has offended his parents it is supposed that he is continually confronted by them in his visions, and can make no progress until he returns home and gets their forgiveness. Also one still under the control of his parents is not supposed to be received without their consent.

The process of initiation is commonly thought to last nine days, but it really goes on till the initiate hears a voice say, "Go thou in peace and sin no more." He cannot leave until thus dismissed in peace, and this often takes two or three weeks and has been known to take six weeks. The teacher is believed to be aware by occult means of the exact moment the words are received, no matter how far off he may be.

During the period of "moanin" one reviews all his sins and repents of them. He "travels" in visions. The presence of his teacher is not necessary for these visions, which usually take place at night. One sees places and persons unknown before. He may learn to speak in the unknown tongue, and it is supposed that those able to read and write learn this more readily. This tongue the converted pretend to understand, but say it is not lawful to speak it except at meetings. The initiate in his visions may have the power of second sight; he may see some one stealing, but does not speak of it, for that would needlessly put the culprit and his family to shame. A penitent thus describes one of his visions. "I thought I was on my back on the sand praying when there appeared a ship flying through the air. I asked to be taken on board and the ship backed and came to rest near me. As I stepped on deck the ship started gliding on the surface of the sea with marvelous swiftiness. We came to another shore and I landed and went up a hill. I met three persons

who said they were called Adam, Eve, and Joshua. I then saw a goat coming and as it came near I saw it was marked with blood on the flank. It grazed on the pasture grass; then suddenly it changed into a woman nursing an infant."

In another vision he saw the District Medical Officer riding in a valley accompanied by his groom. They met a girl carrying fish, and when the girl would not sell, took them by force. The dreamer knew the girl and afterwards asked her about the incident but she said it had never occurred.

One of the converted mentioned that one member could know another "after he had understanding." On being pressed she admitted that there is a pass-word which is given at the penance house. Had an opportunity of private interview presented, the writer feels sure he might have elicited the word and tested its efficacy.

After coming "off the knee" the initiate wears a white band round his head for a month. He must keep to the same diet for nine days and during this time also he may not work. Every day at noon he should be at home to "rejoice." If that hour finds him away from home he must rejoice on the road or on the shore. Thus small parties are occasionally seen in the high-way in the country jumping together and shouting "Hip Houi."

The new member goes to the first meeting after his return home and on this occasion should sing a song which he has received in his visions or composed. Some of these chants catch on and form the hymnal of the sect. A few examples are given below.

In charge of every station with a penance house is a "teacher." These are credited with the power of second sight to the extent noted above, and also to the extent of knowing the backslidings of their members. At a smaller center there is a leader to conduct the meetings. Some one who professes that gift is a "spirit prover." He scans the members while working to note whether each has the right spirit. There is the "Holy Spirit" and the "Spirit of Anti-christ." Another officer is called the "surveyor." It is difficult to get a clear idea of his functions; he is said to "survey the ground" before working begins. He certainly marks lines on the floor with chalk and some signs.

A meeting begins like an ordinary Wesleyan prayer meeting. Some pray, the leader starts hymns. The prayers at this stage during the meeting were considered appropriate and seemly by a Wesleyan minister. As the night goes on the members are warmed up; at the fit time the surveyor, it seems, marks the floor with chalk

and then the working begins. All jump together and shout "Hip Houi" in unison incessantly for hours. Some dance round with the usual erotic postural motions of the negro dances. Some speak "in tongues." Some in frenzy climb into the rafters of the building or on trees. An informant saw a man rush blindly from the praise-house, fall down a steep bank and get up as if nothing had happened, and rush away madly into the darkness. After a while he returned quiet. This frenzied shouting and dancing always takes place. It is called "working the spirit." On some occasions all the members form a procession round the room stooping forwards and shouting and jumping. This is called "riding Zion's donkey." Almost invariably one or more persons fall to the ground unconscious and writhing convulsively. If a woman falls some one ties her dress round her legs. This was found to be necessary to prevent the women exposing themselves.

It is claimed by the converted that if a member is in the right way he is never thrown down by the spirit. Outsiders joining in the rejoicing and members who have "fallen out of line" are so afflicted. Those that get the right spirit may jump and shout in the same spot all night.

Ragguet repudiates the idea that the spirit of God can cast a person grovelling and kicking on the ground. That he says is a devil. If a member falls his teacher flogs and beats him for his sins. Mrs. Baptiste who next to Ragguet is the most revered teacher jumps astride of the offender riding and pommeling him. It is said that a backslider so convicted may be sent back "on the knee." It appears that sometimes when a worshiper is seized with this convulsion the teacher places a lighted candle at his head and marks a cross with chalk at his feet, and then all pray till he comes round. This perhaps is done in the case of contrite persons not yet admitted to the membership. Smoking is absolutely prohibited at meetings. It is abundantly attested and admitted by members that tobacco smoke throws any one who has the spirit into convulsions. A Wesleyan minister saw a penitent under these circumstances rush forward and fall, nearly smashing his head against a post.

This scene of frenzied excitement usually lasts till 3 or 4 a. m. but has been known to continue till 9 a. m., say about twelve hours.

The power of Mrs. Baptiste is instanced in the following incident. While all jumped and shouted, her victim, a strong tall man, stood stock still trembling, and she danced round him. She marked the ground round his feet and placed a lighted candle be-

fore him. Then she ran a little way from him and back behind him. He fell to his hands and knees, and she leaped on his back riding him and sticking her elbows into his ribs. She reproached him with his faults "that frock you give that woman you should have given your wife" and so on. When she visits the village of Barrouallie some will not go to meeting, for when many have fallen in convulsions she leaves them to come to as they may.

If a member is conscious of sin, on entering the praise-house, he may go to each corner, mark the post with chalk and say a prayer. He thus makes atonement and may join in the working and get the right spirit.

When a member dies there is a prayer meeting held. Next night there is a wake, and on the ninth night a special meeting which is particularly fervid. The spirit of the departed brother is supposed to be present assisting.

On Easter and Christmas mornings the members at some country places march clothed in white and with naked feet and lighted candles.

From the above description it is evident that the psychical phenomena of Shakerism are due to hysteria and hypnotism and take their coloring from the religious enthusiasm of which they are a degeneration.

During the period of "moanin" the prolonged gazing at a light, together with the silence and mental abstraction, naturally produces hypnotic sleep. The attitude of expectancy determines the form of the dreams and explains the uniformity of the experience of the candidates in this state. The objectionable feature is of course the abuse of hypnotism, which increases the susceptibility of the subject to suggestion and enhances the tendency to hysteria. It may be questioned also whether the influence of the teachers acquired by these means and the slavish credulity of the converts are desirable elements in the mental life of the people.

The phenomena of the rejoicing are those of many of the epidemics of insanity, which from the earliest times have been known to spring from or be associated with religion. The leaping and shouting, the delirium and incoherent ejaculations, the flagellations and convulsions all have their parallels in the history of epidemic insanity.

We pass over the frantic rites in the worship of Cybele and Bacchus. Among Christian sects the Massabiani described by S. Epiphanius leaped wildly; the Acefales howled and barked in the



streets of Alexandria; the Flagellants starting from Perugia in 1260 spread their infectious madness over all Europe; flagellation characterized the religion of the Zaccharys of Abyssinia. The dance of S. Vitus affected Western Germany during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is described as "a convulsion which infuriated the human frame in a most extraordinary manner. . . . the Bacchantic leaps by which it was characterized, and which gave to those affected whilst performing their wild dance and screaming and foaming with fury, all the appearance of persons possessed."

This picture is reflected in many epidemics of that class to which Shakerism belongs and which are entirely religious in intent.

There may be instanced the Convulsionaries of Paris in 1731; the Barkers and Jerkers of America in 1798 to 1805, and the Revivalists of Ireland whose affliction resulted from the revival meetings; the epidemic of religious enthusiasm in Sweden in 1841; the Velonandrono of Madagascar as late as 1900; and the Dancing Derivishes.

Similar manifestations on a smaller scale and therefore more analogous to the case of St. Vincent are the Lata of Java, the Ikota among the Samoyede women, and the performances of the Klikuschi of Kursh, and of the Holy Rollers of Oregon in 1903.

All these endemic and epidemic affections like that in St. Vincent are characterized by a hysterical choreic or convulsive activity in companies, with wild incoherent speech, temporary unconsciousness of pain and surroundings during the paroxysm, sometimes coma afterwards. They are produced by religious excitement and propagated by imitation.

It must now be considered what effects the practices of the "converted" have or are likely to have on the subjects. The candidates on their discharge from the penance house are observed to be for some time in a dazed stupified condition. This is in part due to that preoccupation of mind which, as noted by Starbuck, often occurs during the conversion period of young persons. But in the penitents it would be undoubtedly accentuated by the repeated and prolonged hypnotism they have undergone.

It has been asserted that a large proportion of those committed for lunacy in St. Vincent have been Shakers. No statistics are available in support of this, but a former dispenser at the hospital assured the writer he knew of three such cases, and a corporal of police stated he had himself been in charge of two such. It is certain that religion takes the most prominent part in the coloring if not

also in the causation of attacks of insanity among West Indian negroes. The writer has observed that "penitents" are prone to hysterical activity when taking chloroform. Under the influence of the drug they shake the body and limbs rapidly or try excitedly to leap from the table after the first few whiffs of the anæsthetic. That epidemics of religious enthusiasm tend to produce individual attacks of persisting alienation, especially of hysterical insanity, is well known.

Dr. Gasquet in this relation says:

"But the influence of religion as an exciting cause of insanity is far more important in its action on masses of men than on individuals. . . . This injurious element appears to consist in encouraging cries and groans, dancing and contortions, in short bodily manifestations of any kind which are propagated by imitation."

It is certain that the exercises of the St. Vincent penitents do not lack this injurious element, besides the fact that the manifestations have become epidemic in the community and habitual in the individuals. The effect of repeated and prolonged indulgence in the orgies of frenzied emotionalism is in St. Vincent intensified by the degeneration of the nerve system of a population saturated with syphilis to an extraordinary degree.

Objection has been taken to the meetings of the penitents on the ground of the opportunities they afford for immorality. While the "penitents" do not affect marriage any more than do the rest of their class, and some even of the teachers are living in the concubinage natural to the negro peasants, yet it is certain that continence is enjoined and expected from the candidates. A member has been heard to reprove another for kissing his sweetheart before coming to meeting. He warned the culprit that he would get "a lash," and this actually happened, for he was overtaken by convulsions and accordingly soundly flogged as a backslider, while in that state. The writer has not been able to gather any evidence of immoral practices in connection with penitent services.

The close association between the erotic and religious feelings is so well established that it is not necessary here to do more than indicate this danger in the words of von Kraft-Ebing. He remarks "how powerfully sensuality expresses itself in the histories of religious fanatics, and in what revolting scenes, true orgies, the religious festivals of antiquity, no less than the 'meetings' of certain sect in modern times express themselves.' . . . . .

"Owing to the correspondence in many points between these

two emotional states, it is clear that when they are very intense the one may take the place of the other, since every manifestation of one element of mental life also intensifies its associations."

This applies with particular cogency to the negro race, in which the sexual passions are stronger and the emotions at the same time more readily stirred than in white races.

When we consider also that in an uneducated class the powers of inhibition are deficiently trained, we arrive at the inevitable conclusion that the "rejoicings" of the penitents must very frequently end in episodes of sensuality.

While considering the similar manifestations of the Wesleyan Revivalism in Tortola, the writer was assured by the Registrar of Births that a noticeable rise of birth-rate took place nine months after the yearly season of revival.

One case has come to the writer's knowledge of a girl, who, becoming pregnant immediately after joining the penitents, continued to participate in the delirious jumping and was overtaken by a fatal abortion. This is a real danger, but perhaps not an important one.

On consideration of the foregoing facts and opinions, the question arises, is it not the duty of the Government to attempt to suppress or lessen a practice which it appears is prejudicial to the well-being of the community?

In facing the problem the Government will certainly be met with the cant cries of "freedom of worship" and "liberty of the subject." These terms have become fetishes of the British people and are hard to ignore. But it is well to consider if it is not erroneous to apply the principles of legislation belonging to the twentieth century to a community which in effect still lives in the Middle Ages.

There does not seem to be any less reason for limiting the spread of mental infection by interfering with the individual liberty, than for isolating a smallpox "contact."

At the present day also religions are not treated by students with any more reverence than they are individually entitled to, after being subjected to rational analysis.

Sir A. Helps enunciated a principle that a country is not free in proportion to the liberty of the individuals to act as they pleased, but in respect of the protection the majority enjoyed from the will or power of the individuals to do harm.

The hymns of the "Penitents" mentioned above are rather de-

void of meaning and consist mostly of conventional religious ejaculations and cant phrases. They are of psychological interest, however, as they illustrate the lack of mentality better than any description. They are soon corrupted so as to contain even less meaning when sung. The examples given below are taken down from persons accustomed to sing them. No. 7 was direct from the original composer.

## I

"Oh come a' we go a happy lan',  
 Happy lan', Happy lan'  
 Come a' we go a happy lan'  
 Happy lan' of Canaan.  
 Weh milk an' wine an' honey deh  
 Honey deh, honey deh,  
 Weh milk an' wine an' honey deh  
 Honey deh a Canaan."

## 2.

"I heard a voice, believer, I heard a voice,  
 King Jesus bawl 'Glory hallelujah.'  
 You pray hard enough,  
 Glory hallelujah  
 You moan hard enough,  
 Glory etc.  
 You seek hard enough,  
 etc."

## 3.

"My dear companions, fare you well,  
 Glory of Victory!  
 I will not follow you to hell  
 Glory of Victory!  
 Blow, blow, trumpet of Sion, blow!  
 Blow, blow, trumpet of Sion, blow!  
 Glory of Victory!"

## 4.

"Oh you see dem pipe smoker,  
 I ask dem weh dey bound to;  
 Dey tell me de wo'ld goin' ketch a fire,  
 Dey bound to dey promise lan'.  
 Oh you see dem rum-drinker,  
 etc.  
 Oh you see dem malice-keeper,  
 etc."

## 5.

"Moanin' Thomas weh you goin'?  
 To Alleluia, my Lord.  
 You mus' be clean wen you goin'  
 To Alleluia, my Lord."

You mus' be pure wen you goin'  
To Alleluia, my Lord."

6.

"Walk in de light, for Jesus de light;  
Walk in de light of de holy light.  
Singing Alleluia. singing Alleluia  
Of de holy light."

7.

"Wen me do moan, me one ah moan,  
Alleluia, ring de bell fo' me!  
Angel Gabriel very jubilee.  
Alleluia, ring de bell fo' me!  
Wen me do seek, me one ah seek,  
etc."

8.

"Down in de valley weep an' moan  
Praise God, honor, honor to his name!  
Moses, Moses, take off dy shoe,  
Praise God, honor, honor to his name!  
De place you stan' is holy groun'  
Praise God, honor, honor, to his name!"

C. W. BRANCH.

ST. VINCENT, WEST INDIES.